

III. Nahum in Biblical Perspective
God's Word to Nations He has Blessed Who Oppose Him
"Behold, I AM is Against You"

Nahum 2

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This is our third study of Nahum. Nahum is teaching us what God does with nations that He has blessed and then they oppose Him. I'd like to start this study by looking back for a moment at Nahum 1 but we will actually cover Nahum 2 in this study. Nahum 1:1-11 says *[1] An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh. [2] The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. [3] The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. [4] He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither; the bloom of Lebanon withers. [5] The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it.*

[6] Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him. [7] The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. [8] But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness. [9] What do you plot against the LORD? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise up a second time. [10] For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried. [11] From you came one who plotted evil against the LORD, a worthless counselor.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

I feel like I need to do a little bit of review from Nahum 1. We have this introduction of this prophetic word of Nahum. Nahum is a word of God to nations through the nation of Nineveh, Assyria. Nineveh is the capital and Assyria is the nation. It is a word from God to His enemies of unambiguous, clear doom and judgment and with no offer of grace and repentance to this nation. Why do I bring that out? I bring that out because this was not the first word of God to Nineveh, Assyria. 140 years earlier God had sent a prophet to Nineveh, Assyria. He was a reluctant and runaway prophet but he was an effective prophet in spite of himself. His name was Jonah. He had come in the 8th century with a message that God's judgment was to fall upon them unless they would repent in 40 days. An amazing spiritual awakening and movement of God's grace came upon that nation and the Bible says from the bottom up, from the people all the way up to the palace there was repentance of sin and fleeing to the Lord for forgiveness and renewal. God's grace and mercy was extended to that nation. Later on in that century God even selected them to use them as an instrument of discipline upon the ten Northern tribes as they were carried off into Assyrian captivity.

Now this blessing and God's use of them has now been distorted by the hand of Nineveh, Assyria. I cannot tell you how evil these people were. If I were to begin to

read to you what we have uncovered concerning their violence, ungodliness, child sacrifices, immorality, idolatry, paganism and their arrogance and bragging of it, it would be hard to believe how evil these people could be. Lately we have been getting these Islamic Jihad reports bringing persecution against our brothers and sisters. Please pray for them. With all due respect with what is happening if I were to read to you what the Assyrians did to God's covenant people you probably would not have a meal today.

God says 'that's enough.' In 640 B.C. He sends Nahum. God says 'I am bringing judgment. There will be no second time. You will be cut off and completely covered.' So now 140 years after He had visited them with blessing He now brings a judgment and this time Nahum is not instructed to use the word 'repent.' The day of grace has already been shut on the nation of Assyria and Nineveh in particular. This was a nation He had blessed and even used. This nation has now turned against Him, rebelled against His glory, His name, His people and His Word. God has now said 'judgment is coming.' It won't come for another 30 years. It won't come until 612 B.C. when the Babylonians arrive and with storm resulting in droughts, quakes, violence and this army of the Babylonians this seemingly unconquerable nation and city will fall.

This is a city that had walls 80 to 100 feet high and 80 to 100 feet thick. They had chariot races on top these walls. They not only had a river surrounding them but had a river running through five gates in their midst. They had a mote surrounding them. These were people who marched out and now had a kingdom that spread from what today we call Afghanistan all the way to Greece and over into what today is Italy and all the way up into Europe and all the way down into North Africa. In fact when this is written, just 13 years earlier they had just conquered the seemingly unconquerable city of Thebes and this conquering is recorded in Nahum 3 which we'll see in the next study. God says that they will now be brought to an end.

In Nahum 1 when he gives this message he gives seven attributes of God. He says I'm a jealous God. He is jealous of His name, His people, His glory and His Word. Secondly, He is an avenging God. God will bring judgment. Thirdly, He is a God of wrath. He pours out wrath against sin, evil and all who raise a standard up against His glory and His majesty. Four, He is a great God. He is omnipotent. Any power that exists in this world only exists at His command. All power resides in the Almighty, El Shaddai, God. Fifthly, He is a patient God. He is slow to anger but that patience should not embolden people to sin. The patience of God is a call to repentance of sin. Six, He is a righteous God and seven, He is a good God for when mercy and grace are not deserved or even wanted He by grace and mercy saves a people for His own glory in spite of themselves by His own strength and power. Again that is not an exhaustive list of God's attributes nor is it an exhaustive list of His instruments.

He also identifies seven instruments that He has available to do salvation or judgment. He has the whirlwind and the tornado. Two He has the storm. Three He has the drought. Four, He has the famine in this broken world. Five, He has the earthquake. Six, He has the fire and seven the flood. All seven of these will be used to bring judgment upon Nineveh. He has already said who He is and now He says what is available to Him. That's why Jesus told us as we see the end of the day coming realize there will be wars and rumors of wars, storms, quakes and this and that. Those are not the signs of His coming but they are the birth pangs of this world groaning under its sin

and the hand of a sovereign God at work in this world bringing all things to a focus conclusion.

Why would Nahum take the time to identify seven of God's attributes and seven instruments that is used? It is because this word of prophetic judgment was not fulfilled in 630 B.C. when it was given but in 612 B.C. when the Babylonians came and when they came, came the storm that broke the five river gates. Then the walls broke apart and then the army of the Babylonians came in. Then came the floods, quakes and all of that and nobody found any trace of Nineveh for thousands of years until 1851. As they began to uncover the evidence they began to see how God had brought that judgment. So why is God taking the time to do this? It is because when it happens you'll know who did it, why He did it and how He did it. Nahum gives who, why and how before it's even done. This word is given, now it is declared and 30 years later it will come to fulfillment.

I want to get started in this study by dividing Nahum 2 up into three sections. The first section is the prophetic destruction found in Nahum 2:1. Here is what He says specifically to Nineveh. Nahum 2:1 says [1] *The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all your strength.* He is fastforwarding them 30 years and outside of Nineveh is now a raid, what we then will know as the Babylonian army. Notice what he calls them, the scatterers. What was one of Assyria's favorite instruments to do? They would go in, conquer a nation, take the plunder back to Nineveh, destroy the nation and scatter the people, including the Israelites, when they conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. It is interesting to note that before it ever occurs that Nahum names the Babylonian army as scatterers. In other words what they did is now coming upon them with the Babylonian army.

Here is what will happen. The army will come up around them and they will cry out '*Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for battle; collect all your strength*' but it will not stop the hand of God. Then he stops from this prophetic destruction. The siege army arrives, the call to arms within Nineveh and then he stops with this interesting statement in the next verse which is the prophetic deliverance.

Nahum 2:2 says [2] *For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob (the Southern Kingdom) as the majesty of Israel (the Northern Kingdom), for plunderers have plundered them and ruined their branches.* So Nineveh, Assyria has come in, taken the ten tribes captive, gone to Thebes and conquered Egypt and on the way back they surrounded the Southern Kingdom. Now they are ready to plunder the Southern Kingdom and God has said enough. God is now about to bring judgment against their arrogance, idolatry, child sacrifices, sexual immorality, sexual admirations and their bragging of what they are doing to all the nations as they plunder them and the judgment God will use on them will be used to deliver His people. Please see that. God's righteous judgment delivered in wrath upon His enemies, those who are enemies of His Word, His glory, His name and His people, will be complete, unstoppable, irrevocable and accomplished but even as it's accomplished that judgment is delivering God's people and setting them free. In the midst of the judgment of His enemies, He is saving, redeeming and restoring His people.

Thirdly, is the description of this judgment. Nahum 2:3-13 says [3] *The shield of his mighty men is red; his soldiers are clothed in scarlet. The chariots come with flashing metal on the day he musters them; the cypress spears are brandished. [4] The chariots race madly through the streets; they rush to and fro through the squares; they*

gleam like torches; they dart like lightning. [5] He remembers his officers; they stumble as they go, they hasten to the wall; the siege tower is set up. (Nineveh brings everything to bear to defend themselves but nothing stands) [6] The river gates are opened; the palace melts away; (Have you ever wondered why the population is so big in Washington D.C.? How many people feed at the trough? Here is what happens to those at the palace who were feeding at the trough of the plunder.) [7] its mistress is stripped; she is carried off, her slave girls lamenting, moaning like doves and beating their breasts. [8] Nineveh is like a pool whose waters run away (picture of the flood God used). "Halt! Halt!" they cry, but none turns back. [9] Plunder the silver, plunder the gold! There is no end of the treasure or of the wealth of all precious things. (They will completely take it all with nothing left.)

[10] Desolate! Desolation and ruin! Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale! (One of their favorite things was to take the leaders and flay their skin and then wear their skin as a robe. They had a fierce countenance when they would come in. Their hearts are melting and their knees are trembling now. The favorite term of Nineveh, Assyria was to be known as the lion, now look what happens.) [11] Where is the lions' den, the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion and lioness went, where his cubs were, with none to disturb? [12] The lion tore enough for his cubs and strangled prey for his lionesses; he filled his caves with prey and his dens with torn flesh.

[13] Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, (This is what is said 30 years before it occurs) and I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no longer be heard.

God says 30 years before it happens, 'you know who I am, you know what I have available and I will do it. Bring every weapon you have in your arrogance against Me and My glory but it will not stand. I the Lord, who visited you with blessings (140 years earlier) 30 years from now will visit you with a sure destruction. I am against you.' Or as I have entitled the sermon, 'I Am is against you.' God's wrath and judgment will be revealed. The wrath of God has been revealed, is being revealed and will be revealed. God says I will bring it.

So what are some takeaways from this? Here is where a pastor is challenged. I love to preach on Gospel evangelism and discipleship, the new life in Christ, the new heart, the new record, the new home and the new family but a preacher has to be faithful just like Nahum had to be faithful. There is no good news until you hear the bad news and that's what makes the Good News so glorious. Here is the bad news. The very word for preaching comes from a verb that comes from a noun and the noun is a town crier or a watchman. In other words a town crier would go through and about every hour had the glorious privilege to say 'all is well, all is well, 10 o'clock all is well, 11 o'clock all is well, 12 o'clock all is well but you ought not to hear me for you ought to be asleep' but when all was not well no matter what time it was, they were to cry out, 'there is danger in the walls!' That's what Nahum is doing. I believe that's what every preacher must do when God's Word says it.

Here God's Word is clear. What does God do with nations that He has blessed that then decide to oppose Him? I want to give you four takeaways in the closing of this study. The first takeaway is God's wrath against sin and His enemies is assured and

inescapable. I will be no means leave the guilty unpunished. I will bring My judgment upon sin and impenitent sinners. God deals with people, families and nations. When God's grace and mercy comes to a person, family and/or nation and they begin to taste it and it begins to work, (we're not talking about people who are lost and get saved) and then they decide to oppose Him, His people, His glory and His Word, one thing is for sure and that is God will not be mocked. Nineveh and Assyria proclaim it. They will be replaced by Babylon and Babylon will come under the same judgment and be buried under the same sands for thousands of years.

Hundreds of years later Jesus Christ will walk the seaside of Galilee. He will speak glorious messages of grace and mercy. He will do miracles and cities like Nineveh will not respond. Woe unto you Corazon, Bethsaida and Capernaum. If next year you go with Me, I will take you to Corazon, Bethsaida and Capernaum. They are ruins. Egypt, its glory is gone. Rome, its glory is gone. Greece, its glory is gone. Sodom and Gomorrah, the rich cities of the plain, decide to stand against God's glory, His name and His righteousness with sexual immorality and aberrations and we still can't find them. They know they were there but still can't be found. Here is the basic assurance that sin and impenitence will not be left out from under the hand of God's judgment. I am against you. I will bring judgment upon you and that is assured.

I am amazed at the technology of this nation. I am amazed at God's grace and mercy to this nation throughout the years. I am amazed at the strength of this nation. I am amazed at everything that is all around this nation but let me assure you, whether it's Nineveh and 40 days or Nineveh and 40 years, God can bring it to an end in a moment for everything stands at His command. You can be assured that the catastrophes of this world and the wars of this age are not out from under the sovereign hand of God. They are not accidental spawns of nature that God has to respond to for they are the hand of the living God and God is proclaiming His might and His majesty in the midst of it. When God moves upon it He is moving with purpose. You can also rest assured that nothing can stop the hand of God. This nation can only be a heartbeat away from nonexistence.

I was raised cowering in an attic bedroom every time a siren was heard absolutely expecting from a 10 year old that a nuclear bomb was going to be dropped upon us. I can still hear Khrushchev's show hitting the table telling us "I will bury you, I will bury you." I saw the walls go up in Berlin and all of that. I saw Romania lifted overnight. I saw an entire Soviet Empire fall apart in three weeks and the same thing can happen right here. The aircrafts will not deliver us. Man the ramparts. Reach for the generals. You can do all of that. If God puts His hand against us, if we continue to oppose Him, Jesus Christ is not the trifle God to appeal to and here to serve America. He is Lord of Lords, King of Kings and disciples are made from all the nations and this nation must welcome His people and His Word and this nation must be blessed His people and His Word, otherwise it will go the way of every nation, whether it's Assyria or Babylon, it does not matter.

Secondly, the wrath of God upon His enemies that is demonstrated always has four purposes. Number one, when His wrath comes whether through catastrophes, wars or the consequences of sinful rebellion, He is bringing initial judgment upon enemies. I did not say final judgment. The final judgment is yet to come. God's wrath has been revealed, is being revealed and is yet to be revealed. What about the Christians who are caught up in it? Number two, God is using these moments to refine His people. He

refines His people in the same catastrophes and He is maturing them. James says in James 1:2-4, [2] *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,* [3] *for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.* [4] *And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* Peter says “I’m refining you like gold.” We live in a broken world and God is accomplishing His purposes even in the very judgments that are falling upon His enemies are being used to refine and mature His people.

Number three, in God’s wrath upon His enemies, He is also giving His people a platform in the midst of these moments to bear witness of His strength, grace and goodness which we have experienced. I still get letters from the churches and pastors from the Gulf Coast that you went down to help, where you paid the salaries and gave up time from work to help those people. There was a moment where there was a hand of God’s judgment, the hand of God refining His people and we saw a platform for God’s people to respond. There is a glorious moment that is demonstrated in such moments.

Let me give you an example of this. Here is this Ebola virus. Here are these two people from Charlotte, North Carolina who I happen to know the families and I certainly know the Samaritan’s Purse ministry. Did you ever wonder why those families were there? Here are unbelievably, horrendous sexually transmitted diseases, bacteria and germs and these two people went over there to help them. They went over there to minister to these people and all kinds of things to care for people. When they contracted Ebola, with great expense and great effort, led by Mr. Graham, God’s people reached out and basically said “We’re going to save these people that reached out to these people over there.” Did you see what the world said? “I don’t know if I want them in my backyard or not.” Here we talk about not leaving people behind but there were a lot of people ready to leave those two people behind, but God’s people were not. They were ready to give and reach. That is repeated time and time again in the midst of these moments for this is a platform for God’s people at great expense to themselves to reach those who are living in a fallen world with consequences all around them.

Here is a fourth thing concerning God’s wrath. When God is doing this He is giving a warning. What is His warning? His warning is only a call to remind you that in these momentary, temporal, catastrophic judgments, there is a judgment to come that is inescapable. God will be no means, in that day, leave the guilty unpunished. Those are the four things that are being said when God’s wrath comes against sin and His enemies.

Here is a third takeaway. There is Nineveh, Assyria and us. Nineveh was a Gentile nation. America is a Gentile nation. Nineveh had been blessed by a great spiritual awakening. We have been blessed by spiritual awakenings and that’s how this country came into existence. From 1735 to 1775 an unbelievable awakening with Edwards, Whitfield and the Tennent brothers who were marching throughout this land preaching the Gospel and God brought a great awakening into this country during that time. Then came Unitarian Universalism, then came transcendentalism and then came all kinds of movements in God’s people where Harvard, Yale and Princeton began to fail and fall aside. Then God, in 1792 brought another awakening and lasted all the way to 1880 with great preachers, even when God brought what I think was judgment upon this nation for man-stealing, called the Civil War, in the midst of that came some of the greatest revivals in the Northern and Southern armies – as God is delivering His people even as He is bringing a purifying judgment which is what He is doing here at Nineveh.

There were amazing revivals in the 1850s starting in Charleston with Jonathan Girardeau preaching the Gospel who was a white pastor of a black church that gave birth to a revival. Then all the white churches started coming to the black church and the revival spread to them. As the revival spread to them people got on the ship and went to New Orleans and New York and the revival spread there. How many of the hundreds and thousands in those revivals that God saved went to meet Jesus even as they were serving in armies five years later!? It was absolutely amazing what was taking place then and it continued on into 1880. Then came the greatest enemy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and it is not Islamic fundamentalism or Richard Dawkins and the new atheism. The greatest enemy is theological liberalism within the church. It started in 1880 and it began to pulsate in every single denomination and it's been killing us ever since.

Now stop and put the years together. How many years did God deliver? He delivered them and then 140 years later came the judgment. When was the last time America had a spiritual awakening? It ended about 140 years ago. The timelines are uncanny in their similarities so I cannot be silent on it. God has not blessed us with one awakening, He has blessed us with two. We are Gentile nation that has been blessed by God that has then decided to oppose God and so have we. One of you had sent me an email while I was gone to let me know one of the many oppositions – soft oppositions, we're not any rock, so don't even compare what they are going through to what we're going through but it's clear that it's coming. Unless the church of Jesus Christ becomes salt and light, once again it's coming. This email said that the government/IRS is now going to keep track of pastors to see if they are preaching something political.

Let me make something abundantly clear here. I don't support endorsed candidates and I will tell you why. I don't do that because I'm the pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church and if I endorse someone then everybody out there assumes you, as a church goer to Briarwood, endorse that person as well and that's not fair to you. So I don't do it and nor does this staff. It doesn't mean I can't do it if I wanted to. If you'll listen to me preach long enough it won't take you long to figure out where I'm voting. What the IRS threatens has absolutely nothing to do with that principle. I do not, not endorse because they say they will bring charges against me or arrest me or take this from me. I have an inalienable right of the freedom of speech and it cannot be taken away from me by the IRS. I could care less what they have to say to me. My decision and my policy to not endorse a candidate has absolutely nothing to do with them. It has everything to do with what I think is right and fair for you. God has given me an inalienable right and a call and I must obey God rather than man. Because God has called us to that then we will speak to a nation, even with the persecution of trying to silent voices and they will be spoken to.

Here is the fourth takeaway. Nineveh was a Gentile nation, blessed by God and then opposed God. No opportunity of repentance was given to Nineveh. I have no such word today. I am praying that an open door for a spiritual awakening is yet before us. This is also why I am preaching on the book of Joel on Sunday nights. There will be no awakening in America until we have a revival in the church, until we quit doing Jesus as your seven steps as your life coach from the pulpits. We have to get back to the Gospel, its glorious privileges, its blessings, its call and its obligations and until we get back to that with the majesty of the God of glory and all of His attributes of praise, our Thrice

Holy God who is gracious, powerful and good, who has said He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished but has also said 'I have now made for you a way of escape.'

What would it look like in churches if God were to bring an awakening back to this country that would forestall His judgment? Churches will once again gather for worship and there will be a lot more concern about the praise of God than their personal preferences in a worship service. There will be a lot more concern about God being lifted up and glorified than whether they received their weekly pick-me-up and their happy hour moment. There will be vibrant small groups where people are being discipled and discipling others. You'll see people gather for prayer. I know seven who are meeting regularly who are meeting right here, praying for revival and for God to do a work in this nation. There will be intercessory prayer that is going on. There will be personal evangelism where we are not waiting for the preacher to save everyone but we are going out when we disassemble to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our family and friends. When those things happen then we'll see an awakening in this country. It has to come from the church of Jesus Christ and God's people who are alive with the passion, grace, glory and majesty of Christ. Then we can see this awakening in our nation.

I am praying for the day of grace has not been shut. I cannot even imagine the words 'God gave them over.' I am praying that God has not given us over. I am praying that the church of Jesus Christ will love God and others more than wanting to be liked. I think Margaret Thatcher said 'If your goal in life is to be liked, there is no telling what you'll believe or quit believing. There is no telling what you'll say or quit saying.' Our goal is not to be liked. Our goal is to love people, whether they like us or not. We love them. We'll lay down our lives for Jesus Christ to be preached and shared and lived to them and for them.

I know I mentioned Assyria, Corazon, and Bethsaida but let me give you another one. Where did God bring a blessing to a nation? It was the 16th century when He visited Germany with the Reformation in a place called Wittenberg to a man named Martin Luther. People were getting converted. The church was reformed. Doctrine and doxology was all taking place and we began to produce great music, technology and science and all of this came right out of that nation of Germany. In this last century there have been two wars with 11 to 12 million German soldiers dead and 3 million plus German civilians dead. When it is over, it is partitioned and becoming a playground for political powers for decades. This is a nation that had been blessed and in the 19th century became the place that produced the greatest enemy against the Gospel – theological liberalism was born right within its boundaries. The result is when a church is taking Jews to their death screaming, all the church did was turn up their organ. There was no robust church in Germany. They put their trust first in a Kaiser then in a Fuhrer instead of in the One true and living God.

The church of Jesus Christ, I believe, is at a crossroads. I expect the world, governments and culture to do what they are doing. The only thing that will stop it is a vibrant, Godly witness of love and truth from the people of God. I just pray for some way that God will allow me to be a part of it

Here is the last thought, personally. Remember this. The way of escape is sure for now. There is coming a day where the way of escape is closed and it's called death or the second coming of Christ but right now there is a way of escape. The reason why is that I Am is no longer against you but I Am became for you at the cross. If God be for us

then who can be against us? You can't be saved without the wrath of God so Jesus went to the cross and all that wrath that should have fallen upon us, His people for all of eternity, fell right there on Him at Calvary. When that wrath came He opened the door of escape for sinners. Flee the wrath to come for the wrath has already come upon Christ for sinners who flee to Him and He is a strong tower. If you flee to Him you will have everlasting life. If you don't there is a wrath to come but today there is a Savior who is Christ the Lord, who drank that cup of wrath that you can drink today, a cup of life. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. There are many today reading this who I know have fled the wrath to come and they have come to Jesus Christ as Lord and King. God, would You allow us to know the reviving hand of our gracious God upon our churches? We are in desperate need of it. This nation is in need of us fleeing to You that we might go to them and they then might flee to You. O God our God, there may be some reading this that You have drawn to this to warn them of the wrath to come but tell them of Jesus who humbled Himself, the King of glory that the wrath that should have come to me, He put Himself in my place that I might flee to Him for everlasting life. Dear friend, if you have prayed that prayer praise the Lord. If you want to pray with someone please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 978-2200. Come to Christ and instead of wrath know the grace and mercy of God in Christ, the Lord of glory for I pray this Father, in Jesus' Name, Amen.